

James and Faith

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1. 'Faith' In the Epistle of James

The word 'faith occurs 14 times in 10 verses in James.

James 1:3	<i>because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.</i>
James 2:5	<i>Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?</i>
James 2:14	<i>What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?</i>
James 2:17,18	<i>In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.</i>
James 2:20	<i>You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?</i>
James 2:22	<i>You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.</i>
James 2:24	<i>You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.</i>
James 2:26	<i>As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.</i>
James 5:15	<i>And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.</i>

a. Examples of Faith

- Noah - building the Ark
- Abraham - accepting the call of God
- Joshua - crossing the Jordan

- David - defeating Goliath
- Daniel plus the 'Three'
- 3 wise men
- Centurion Mat 8:5-10
- Peter walking on the water Mat 14:28-33

b. Meaning Of Faith

There are three main words that we need to review to understand Biblical faith.

אֱמוּנָה emunah, em-oo-naw'; or (short.) 'emunah, em-oo-naw'; fem. of H529; lit. firmness; fig. security; mor. fidelity:--faith (-ful, -ly, -ness, [man]), set office, stability, steady, truly, truth, verily.

ολιγοπιστός, ol-ig-op'-is-tos; from G3641 and G4102; incredulous, i.e. lacking confidence (in Christ):--of little faith.

πίστις, pis'-tis; from G3982; persuasion, i.e. credence; mor. conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), espec. reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstr. constancy in such profession; by extens. the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself:--assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.

c. Origin Of Faith

- Heb 11:1 *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*
- Romans 10:17 ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ.

Rom 10:17 *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of God (θεοῦ).*

2. The Subject of Faith

a. Faith Pleases God

Do you truly want to please God? You must be a man or woman of faith to do this.

Heb 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

b. Faith Needs Testing

Faith, when tested, develops, in us, the essential quality of perseverance, without which we will never become mature and complete.

James 1:3,4 *because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

c. Faith Can Lose Focus

Faith can lose its focus if we allow a rival (worldliness) to stand in its place.

James 2:5-7 *Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?*

This may be an unpopular scripture in our society, but becoming rich isn't in God's main plan for Christians. Jesus, in the account of the rich young man (Mk 10:17-27), shows how too much wealth can cut across our relationship with God and effectively nullify our service to him. Remember, we can only serve one Master.

Mat 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."* ['Money' = 'Mammon' ... worldliness]

Does this mean Jesus doesn't accept those who are wealthy? Not at all, but they have to guard the influence wealth could have over them.

Mat 27:57 *As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.*

d. Faith and Healing

'Divine healing' is a major issue in areas of today's church and the requirement to have 'believing faith' in order to receive that healing is hotly debated. A serious question we have to ask ourselves is, "*Is it only by our own faith that we are healed?*" This is taught in the affirmative in some areas of the Western Church. A wrong response to it has led to the deaths of several hundred Believers, who died – after being convinced to refuse medical treatment - accused of 'not having sufficient faith', or 'having sin in their lives'? God will not be boxed in on any issue. To the question of whose faith, His answer is "Yes" and "No".

- In these scriptures, it is the sick who exercise their own faith.
 - Mat 9:28-30 *When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; 30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this."*
 - Mark 5:34 *He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."*

- In these scriptures, if there are those who lack faith, we can exercise our faith on their behalf.
 - James 5:15 *And the prayer offered [by the 'Elders'] in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.*
 - Mat 9:2 *Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw **their** faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."*

Indeed, Christ is far more compassionate to anyone lacking faith for healing. Do we remember Mark 9:23,24?

Mark 9:23,24 *Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"*

e. Faith by the Kilo?

Another myth to expose, is that faith is a quantity. Too many Christians try to get 'recharged' by going to spiritual meetings, in order to 'get more faith'. Part of this is because many of today's teachers tell people they don't have enough, which is why many are in a spiritual mess. On the face of it, it sounds good teaching, but, like anything that perverts the word of God, it is in fact wicked heresy. Such teachers forget the obligations on teaching, established by God.

James 3:1 *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*

1. Faith is not a quantity. You don't measure it by the kilo, litre, pound or pint. You have it or you don't. If you have it, you can still choose to exercise it or not. Only a tiny amount of faith is needed to do the greatest task ... if you **use** it.

Luke 17:5,6 *The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*

2. When linked back to Mark 9:23,24 (above), it shows how God will help any Believer to operate on the faith level. Indeed, we see, in the Mark passage, how prayer and fasting link in to become an essential part of faith and healing.

Mark 9:28,29 *And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."*

3. Faith Demands Action Not Words

a. James' Teachings

This is probably the key contribution that James makes to teaching on faith. He effectively condemns what history records as the Medieval-type approach to faith and spirituality, which had people becoming hermits or going into monasteries/convents to develop faith through prayer and meditation. This was escapism and did nothing to progress the Gospel. This resulted in no one being touched by the good news about Jesus.

James 2:14 *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds [‘εργον’ – actions]? Can such faith save him?*

Is faith alone sufficient for a Believer? Not according to James. He certainly isn't talking about being saved by works, but his message to us is that the character of a truly saved person shows fruit. Faith works through you and shows itself in effective relationships with people.

James 2:17,18 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

James 2:20 *You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.*

Justification shows itself by the way we live and act, not by simply exercising faith. --- action is the basis of the **Great Commission**!!!!

b. Other Teachings

Another example of faith in action is that of the Centurion at Capernaum. This Gentile acknowledged Jesus to be exactly who He said He was.

Mat 8:5-13 *When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 6 "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralysed and in terrible suffering." 7 Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." 8 The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 10 When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. 11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.*

This man knew – deep in his heart – that all Jesus had to do was to say his servant was healed. He didn't need to see Jesus enter his home and lay hands on the sick man. This Centurion operated at the 'rhema' word of Jesus, "**Go!**" (v13), and received a miracle.

c. Reprise – Faith and Action

Faith and action need to work in harmony, not in opposition. The church without faith is nothing more than a spiritual corpse – dead, motionless, decaying.

James 2:26 *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

Rom 10:13-17 *for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' 16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of God.*

This means sitting in your spiritual 'monastery', just praying all the time, is by no means sufficient ... It's certainly no way to fulfil the 'Great Commission'. Prayer and doctrine are a critical part of mission and there's no point starting without these already in place. But, they are by no means everything. If people will only pray and no one will act, we're back in Isaiah 6. Someone has to go!

Isa 6:5-8 *"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

Isaiah went through a spiritual renewal, as he was cleansed from guilt and the sin in his life was removed. Let Jesus have the final word. This will develop into our plan – worldwide – over the next two years ... we have to do everything required by the 'Great Commission'.

Mat 28:19,20 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*